



**JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR
NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES**

Monterey Institute
of International Studies
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**ANNOUNCED TODAY:
PROGRESS TOWARDS A MIDDLE EAST ZONE FREE OF
WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon announced today in New York that Finland's Undersecretary of State Jaakko Laajava will facilitate preparations for the 2012 conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Finland will host the conference, the convening of which is mandated by the Action Plan adopted at the Review Conference of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 2010. The exact date of the conference, its agenda and participants are yet to be agreed.

Dr. Chen Kane, CNS Senior Research Associate, formerly with the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, said, "The appointment of a facilitator and a host country is a small but important step towards convening the 2012 conference. The states in the region now face the test of whether they can agree on substantive details, such as the objectives of the conference, its agenda, and outcome." She continued that "the facilitator should take great care not to promote an overly ambitious agenda or outcome, which may well derail the entire event. The Nuclear Security Summit convened by President Obama in Washington in April 2010 is a stellar example of how to successfully set an agenda to achieve results on a sensitive issue."

"The choice of Finland as the host country and the senior seasoned diplomat Undersecretary Jaakko Laajava is an excellent choice," said CNS Deputy Director Dr. Patricia Lewis. "The experience of Finland through the hosting of the Helsinki Process that built bridges in a divided Europe and helped bring the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion is one from which we can all learn." She added, "The fact that all the Arab states, Israel, and Iran, along with Russia, the UK and the United States have agreed on the facilitator's name and on the host for the meeting shows a strong commitment to moving forward with efforts to promote peace and disarmament in the Middle East. The UN Secretary-General and all the governments involved are to be congratulated."

CNS has prepared a [factsheet](#) on the 2012 Middle East Conference. For additional commentary, please contact CNS experts:

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